Renegade Press PRESENTS

WORDSMITH

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And Now a Word from Our Sponsor.....

Arizona in December.

The crescent desert moon hangs like a sickle in the purple sky as the evening star peeks around the ragged edges of the dying sunset.

I went into the desert, to hear U2 and to get away from Los Angeles. It was a respite from the worries of the market and the pressures of the city. It moved me to pick my pen and speak to all of you out there, again.

I looked around the stadium at the concert and saw 50,000 people from around the country, brought together for two days of optimistic pessimism about life, love and the state of the world today. Ireland, El Salvador, assassination, despair.....and in the midst of it all, hope. For a new age, or just a better world. A temporary unity of thought and emotion. And, looking around, I thought of our "audience" for the various Renegade books. (I would guess we reach about 50,000 people each month) How diverse we all are, and yet we are brought together each month when we pick up the same stories and share our collective emotions in the words and pictures.

Sometimes it feels as if there is no hope, no way out of despair, and I know we have all felt these emotions. But the gift of communication allows all of us to see that we are not alone in our trapped emotions. And in sharing the problems, we share the solutions.I may not be able to do much about the state of the world, the bombings in Ireland, the fear and pain brought by american intervention in South America, the careless murders in all cities where handguns are bought casually ; but I can talk about my fears and perhaps hope that some awareness creeps in. I live in a country where, until I decide to get US citizenship, I cannot vote. I feel helpless, until I remember that I have a forum.

In the desert, all looks barren to the casual observer. But in reality, the options for life are boundless, simply well hidden. Perhaps we can all learn to take our options for life out of hiding, dust them off and learn to use them for the betterment of our planet.

With the New Year, I wish you all the pleasure of seeing your hopes fulfilled and your spiritual/emotional quests answered.

I'll see you again in the next month or so.

Deni

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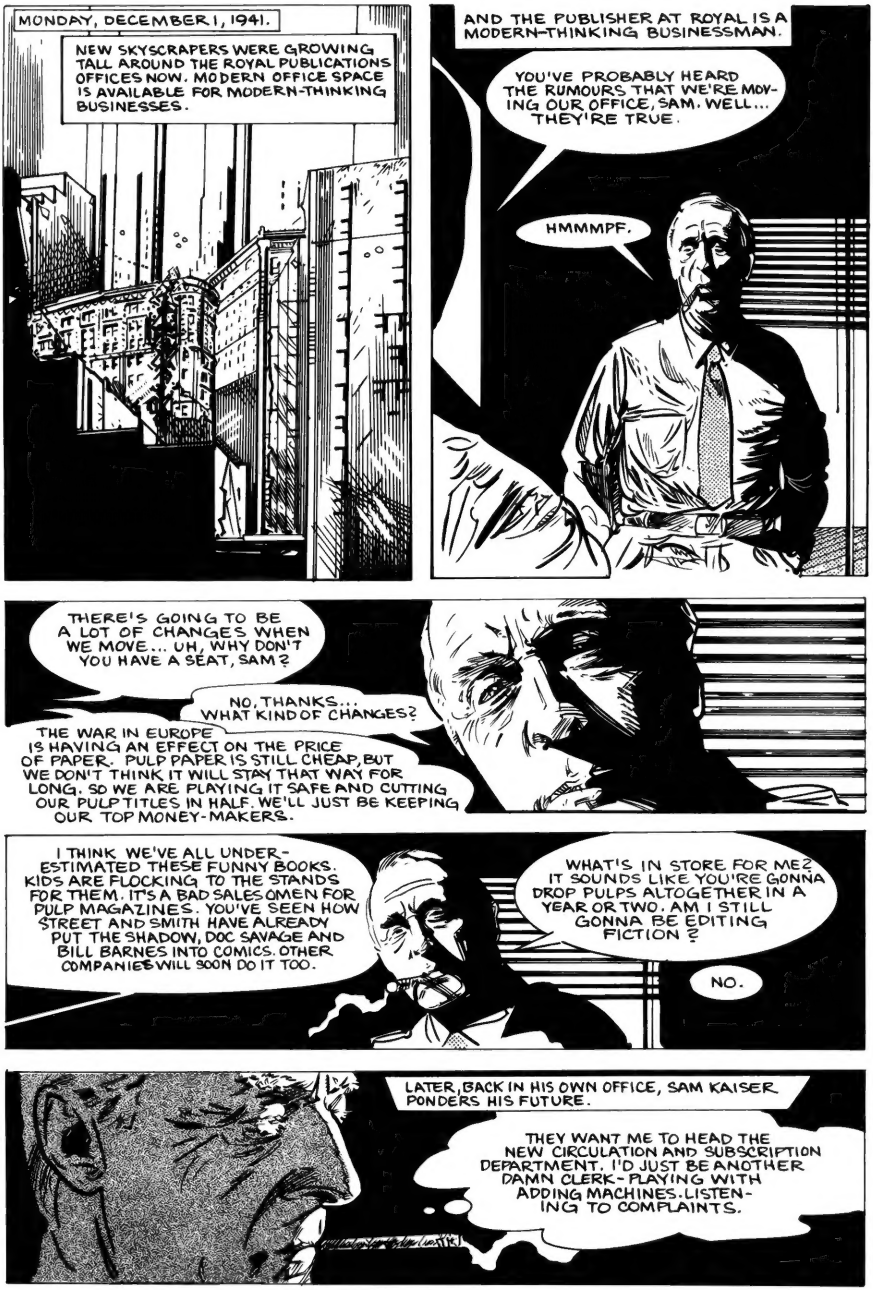
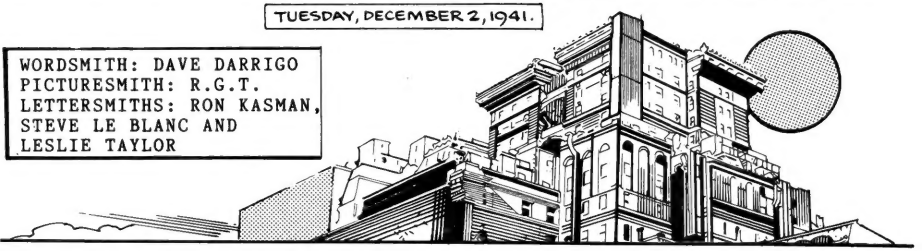
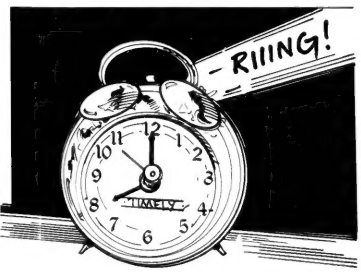

MONDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1941.
NEW SKYSCRAPERS WERE GROWING TALL AROUND THE ROYAL PUBLICATIONS OFFICES NOW. MODERN OFFICE SPACE IS AVAILABLE FOR MODERN-THINKING BUSINESSES.
AND THE PUBLISHER AT ROYAL IS A MODERN-THINKING BUSINESSMAN.
YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD THE RUMOURS THAT WE'RE MOVING OUR OFFICE, SAM. WELL... THEY'RE TRUE.
HMMMPF.
THERE'S GOING TO BE A LOT OF CHANGES WHEN WE MOVE... UH, WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A SEAT, SAM?
NO, THANKS... WHAT KIND OF CHANGES?
THE WAR IN EUROPE IS HAVING AN EFFECT ON THE PRICE OF PAPER. PULP PAPER IS STILL CHEAP, BUT WE DON'T THINK IT WILL STAY THAT WAY FOR LONG. SO WE ARE PLAYING IT SAFE AND CUTTING OUR PULP TITLES IN HALF. WE'LL JUST BE KEEPING OUR TOP MONEY-MAKERS.
I THINK WE'VE ALL UNDER-ESTIMATED THESE FUNNY BOOKS. KIDS ARE FLOCKING TO THE STANDS FOR THEM. IT'S A BAD SALES OMEN FOR PULP MAGAZINES. YOU'VE SEEN HOW STREET AND SMITH HAVE ALREADY PUT THE SHADOW, DOC SAVAGE AND BILL BARNES INTO COMICS. OTHER COMPANIES WILL SOON DO IT TOO.
WHAT'S IN STORE FOR ME? IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE GONNA DROP PULPS ALTOGETHER IN A YEAR OR TWO. AM I STILL GONNA BE EDITING FICTION?
NO.
LATER, BACK IN HIS OWN OFFICE, SAM KAISER PONDERS HIS FUTURE.
THEY WANT ME TO HEAD THE NEW CIRCULATION AND SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT. I'D JUST BE ANOTHER DAMN CLERK - PLAYING WITH ADDING MACHINES. LISTENING TO COMPLAINTS.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1941.

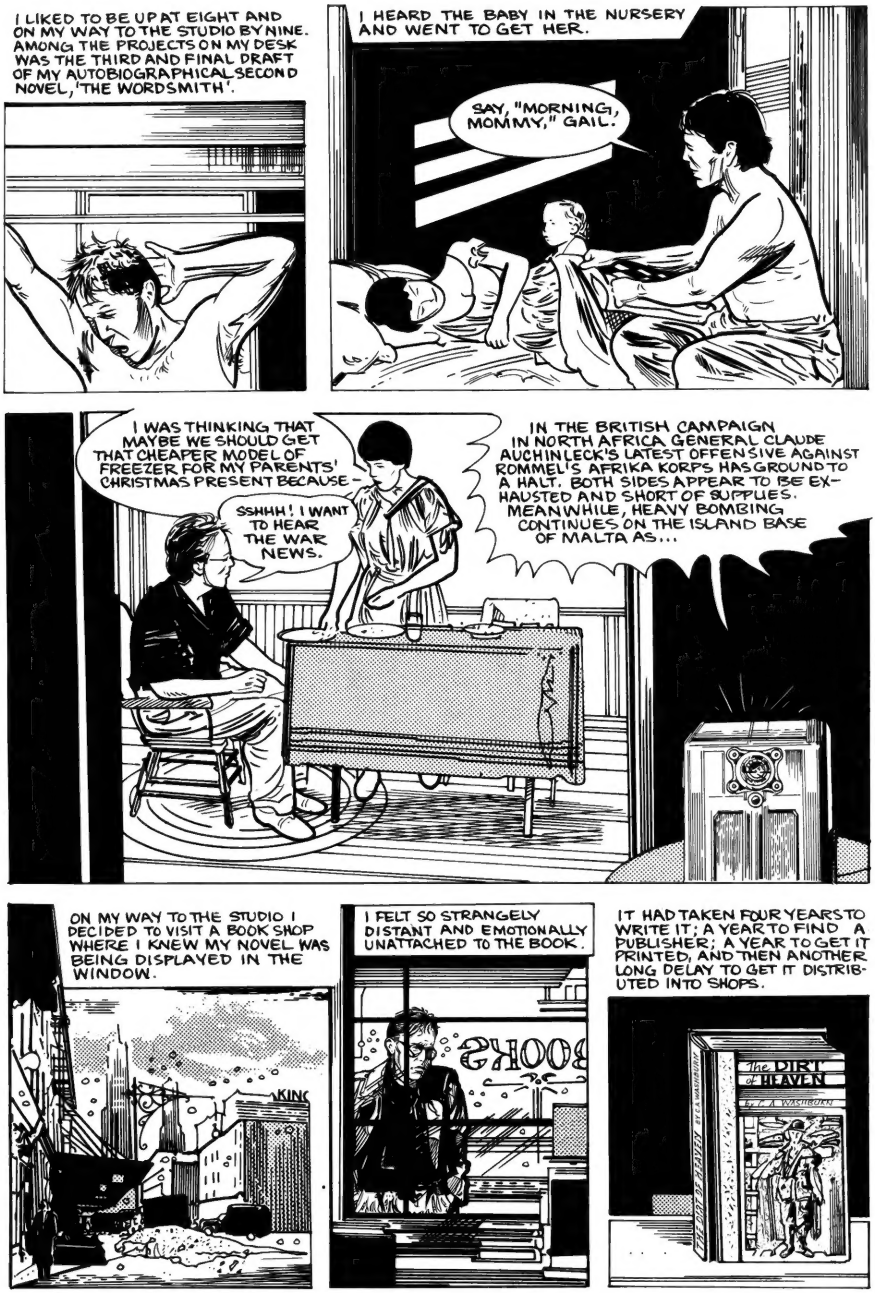
WORDSMITH: DAVE DARRIGO
PICTURESMITH: R.G.T.
LETTERSMITHS: RON KASMAN, STEVE LE BLANC AND LESLIE TAYLOR



NANCY AND I, AND THE BABY, WERE IN OUR NEW APARTMENT.



I WAS MAKING ENOUGH MONEY NOW THAT I COULD AFFORD TO KEEP MY OLD PLACE AS A STUDIO.


I LIKED TO BE UP AT EIGHT AND ON MY WAY TO THE STUDIO BY NINE. AMONG THE PROJECTS ON MY DESK WAS THE THIRD AND FINAL DRAFT OF MY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SECOND NOVEL, 'THE WORDSMITH'.
I HEARD THE BABY IN THE NURSERY AND WENT TO GET HER.
SAY, "MORNING, MOMMY," GAIL.
I WAS THINKING THAT MAYBE WE SHOULD GET THAT CHEAPER MODEL OF FREEZER FOR MY PARENTS' CHRISTMAS PRESENT BECAUSE -
SSHHH! I WANT TO HEAR THE WAR NEWS.
IN THE BRITISH CAMPAIGN IN NORTH AFRICA GENERAL CLAUDE AUCHINLECK'S LATEST OFFENSIVE AGAINST ROMMEL'S AFRIKA KORPS HAS GROUND TO A HALT. BOTH SIDES APPEAR TO BE EXHAUSTED AND SHORT OF SUPPLIES. MEANWHILE, HEAVY BOMBING CONTINUES ON THE ISLAND BASE OF MALTA AS...
ON MY WAY TO THE STUDIO I DECIDED TO VISIT A BOOK SHOP WHERE I KNEW MY NOVEL WAS BEING DISPLAYED IN THE WINDOW.
I FELT SO STRANGELY DISTANT AND EMOTIONALLY UNATTACHED TO THE BOOK.
IT HAD TAKEN FOUR YEARS TO WRITE IT; A YEAR TO FIND A PUBLISHER; A YEAR TO GET IT PRINTED, AND THEN ANOTHER LONG DELAY TO GET IT DISTRIBUTED INTO SHOPS.
The DIRT of HEAVEN

I WAS STILL STOPPING IN AT THE NEWSSTAND THAT MY FRIEND JOE PERKINS HAD ONCE RUN. JOE DIED TWO YEARS AGO, SINCE THEN THE STAND HAD CHANGED HANDS A FEW TIMES. THE LATEST OWNER - GEORGE MAHONEY - LOOKED LIKE HE'D KEEP IT FOR GOOD.
GEORGE WAS A NICE GUY, BUT MY VISITS TO THE STAND WOULD NOT BE THE SAME NOW.
HI, GEORGE.
'MORNIN', CLAY. KINDA WARM OUT, HUH? FOR THIS TIME O' YEAR.
YEAH, IT IS... I SEE YOU'VE GOT A LOT OF THOSE FUNNY BOOKS ON SALE NOW. MORE OF THEM THAN FICTION MAGAZINES. DO THEY REALLY SELL FOR YOU?
SURE DO. THEY SELL REAL GOOD! SUPERMAN. BATMAN. CAP'N MARVEL. BULLETMAN. SPYSMASHER... THAT CAPTAIN AMERICA SELLS REAL FAST. HE'S THE FASTEST SELLER OF 'EMALL.
YOU WANNA BUY THAT FOR SOME YOUNGSTER THAT YOU KNOW?
NO. IT'S NOT FOR A YOUNGSTER. IT'S FOR ME.
WHEN I GOT TO THE STUDIO I READ THE CAPTAIN AMERICA ISSUE, AND THEN PUT IT ON A GROWING STACK OF COMIC BOOKS.
I KNEW THAT THE SUCCESS OF CAPTAIN AMERICA HAD SPAWNED MANY OTHER PATRIOTIC COSTUMED HEROES. I HAD A FEW OF THEM IN MY STACK. HEROES LIKE UNCLE SAM, THE EAGLE, MINUTEMAN, THE FIGHTING YANK. I ENJOYED THESE COMIC CHARACTERS SO MUCH THAT I HAD CREATED MY OWN SUPER-PATRIOT. I CALLED HIM 'THE FREEDOM FIGHTER' - USING THE SAME NAME I'D GIVEN TO ONE OF MY SUPER-SECRET SERVICE AGENT HEROES IN THE PULPS.
BRRING!

IT WAS VINCE GALLO CALLING. VINCE WAS AN OLD FRIEND AND FELLOW PULP WRITER.
HAVE YOU HEARD THE NEWS? SAM KAISER HAS QUIT HIS JOB.
WHAT? WHY? WHAT HAPPENED?
THEY'RE PUTTING HIM OUT TO PASTURE. THEY WANT TO SHUFFLE HIM OFF TO ANOTHER DEPARTMENT. HE NIXED THAT IDEA, AND THEN HE DECIDED TO RESIGN RATHER THAN BE FIRED. I THOUGHT I'D GO SEE HIM ON FRIDAY, WHEN HE CLEANS OUT HIS DESK. WANNA JOIN ME?
YOU BET YOUR LIFE!
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1941.
I HAD HEARD THAT A COMPANY CALLED K.L.R. PUBLISHING WAS LOOKING FOR EXPERIENCED WRITERS TO DO COMIC BOOKS. I WENT TO SEE THEM.
I MET THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF K.L.R. COMICS, MORT ZACK. K.L.R. PUT OUT SUCH TITLES AS 'COLORFUL COMICS', 'LUMBER JACK' (THE CHARACTER FROM THE NEWSPAPER STRIP), 'BARRY KING, BOY DETECTIVE' AND 'THE TWISTER' (THE HERO TURNED HIMSELF INTO A HUMAN TORNADO).
AS YOU CAN SEE, WE DO ALL THE CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION WORK HERE, IN HOUSE. WE DON'T PARCEL IT OUT TO FREE-LANCE STUDIOS. BUT WE AREN'T HAPPY WITH OUR SCRIPTS LATELY. WE WANT MORE WRITERS FROM OUTSIDE TO CONTRIBUTE TO US.
I UNDERSTAND. YOU KNOW MY CREDENTIALS. I'VE WORKED IN THE PULPS FOR OVER EIGHT YEARS.

I'D LIKE TO DO ONE OF THOSE PATRIOTIC COSTUMED HEROES.
GREAT! WE WANT TO PUBLISH SOMETHING LIKE CAPTAIN AMERICA.
I'VE GOT A CHARACTER CALLED THE FREEDOM FIGHTER. I DID A FEW PULP STORIES ON HIM. I'M SURE I COULD ADAPT IT INTO COMICS.
SOUNDS GREAT. I LOVE IT.
EXCUSE ME, MORT. I'M GOING TO LUNCH.
I REALLY GET A KICK OUT OF READING CAPTAIN AMERICA, SO I'M SURE I'LL ENJOY WRITING A BOOK LIKE IT.
OKAY, JAKE. SHOW ME THOSE NEW PAGES WHEN YOU GET BACK.
JAKE'S ONE OF OUR NEW MEN. HE'S GOT ENORMOUS POTENTIAL.
WHEN CAN YOU GET A FREEDOM FIGHTER SCRIPT TO ME, CLAY?
OH - A WEEK, OR TEN DAYS.
FINE. I'LL GET JAKE TO START DESIGNING THE CHARACTER.
OH. BEFORE I GO - I WANTED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING.
DO YOU HAVE AN OPENING FOR AN EXPERIENCED EDITOR?
ACTUALLY I PLANNED TO HIRE AN EDITOR SOON. THERE'S MORE WORK THAN I CAN HANDLE ALREADY. AND NOW THAT WE'RE EXPANDING, I'LL NEED HELP.
IF YOU HAVE SOMEBODY IN MIND THEN SEND HIM IN. I'D LIKE TO TALK WITH HIM.
THANKS! I'LL HAVE HIM HERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1941
VINCE AND I ARRIVED AT THE ROYAL OFFICES TO VISIT SAM.
VINCE STOPPED OUTSIDE SAM'S DOOR.
YOU GO AHEAD, CLAY. I'LL JOIN YOU IN A MINUTE.
THE MAN WE HAD CALLED 'STOGEY SAM' FOR SO LONG, WAS SLOWLY EMPTYING HIS DESK. I GREETED HIM, THEN I STAYED IN THE CORNER AND QUIETLY WATCHED HIM PUT HIS WORLD – HIS LIFE – INTO TWO CARDBOARD BOXES.
IT WAS PAINFUL TO WATCH HIM. HE HAD GIVEN ME SO MUCH IN MY WRITING CAREER. NOW, I WONDERED, WOULD HE LET ME DO SOMETHING BACK? WOULD HE LET ME GIVE HIM A FUTURE?
SO MANY YOUNG WRITERS HAVE BEEN THROUGH THIS OFFICE. LIKE YOU, CLAY. I'M FINDING IT HARD TO REMEMBER THEM NOW. I'VE FORGOTTEN MOST OF THEIR NAMES... SOMETIMES I JUST REMEMBER THEM BY THEIR PEN NAMES.
I HOPE THEY FIND THEIR OWN IDENTITIES AS WRITERS. NO ONE SHOULD HAVE TO GO THROUGH LIFE WORKING UNDER AN ASSUMED NAME.
I NEVER TOLD SAM THAT I'M AN ORPHAN. HE'LL NEVER KNOW THAT CLAY WASHBURN IS... AN ASSUMED NAME.

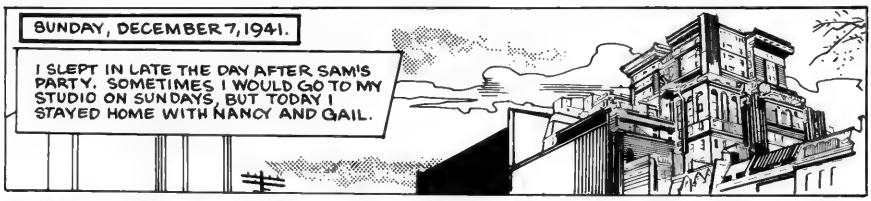
SO, TELL ME, KASPER. IS THERE A STAFF GOING-AWAY PARTY FOR SAM THAT CLAY AND I CAN ATTEND?
PARTY? UH NO. WHY SHOULD THERE BE A PARTY? IT'S A SAD OCCASION, ISN'T IT?
AW, FOR PETE'S SAKE! IT'D BE A SAD OCCASION IF SOMEONE WAS GOING AFTER TWO YEARS! BUT SAM'S BEEN HERE TWENTY YEARS!!
HI, SAM.
WHAT'RE YOU GETTING RILED UP ABOUT OUT THERE VINCE? SOMEBODY FORGET YOUR CHECK?
YEAH, SAM. THEY DID IT TO ME AGAIN.
SAM, HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF GETTING A JOB IN THE COMIC BOOK BUSINESS? I'M SURE THEY COULD USE A MAN LIKE YOU.
BE SERIOUS, CLAY. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THOSE THINGS.
DON'T SHORT-CHANGE YOURSELF, SAM.
YOU KNOW WHAT THE READERS WANT. YOU KNOW ALL THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE. YOU'VE GOT TWENTY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE.
I HAPPEN TO KNOW A COMIC PUBLISHER WHO'S LOOKING FOR AN EDITOR.
YOU'RE BOTH CRAZY. IT'S A WHOLE NEW FIELD. I'D BE OUTTA MY LEAGUE. BUT, THANKS FOR YOUR CONCERN.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6 1941
VINCE AND I DROPPED EVERYTHING WE WERE DOING TO ARRANGE A PARTY FOR SAM.
RESTAURANT

WE SECRETLY CALLED HIS WIFE, FLO, AND MADE CERTAIN THAT SHE WOULD GET SAM TO COME TO THE RESTAURANT. VINCE AND I WERE DOING WELL IN OUR WRITING CAREERS - WE WERE TWO OF SAM'S BEST PUPILS - AND SO WE FOOTED MOST OF THE BILL.
SAM WAS IN GOOD SPIRITS. HE WAS HAPPY TO SEE SO MANY OLD FRIENDS AGAIN.

I'D LIKE TO PROPOSE A TOAST TO ONE OF THE BEST FICTION EDITORS IN THIS BUSINESS. A MAN WE ALL LOOKED UP TO AND RESPECTED. HE WAS PART TEACHER - AND PART FOOTBALL COACH. HE NEVER MINCED HIS WORDS, AND SO I WON'T EITHER... SAM, YOU'LL BE MISSED... TO SAM KAISER.
TO SAM KAISER!
THANK-YOU, ALL. I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

ENJOYING YOURSELF, SAM? HOW WAS YOUR MEAL?
GREAT... THANKS FOR DOING THIS, CLAY. IT HELPS. EVEN AN OLD CUSS LIKE ME CAN HAVE HIS HEART-STRINGS PULLED, ON OCCASION.
NOW THAT I'VE GOT A MINUTE ALONE WITH YOU -
- I WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT I'M DOING WORK FOR THE COMIC BOOKS, AND —
YOU'RE KIDDING! YOU'VE JUST HAD A NOVEL PUBLISHED. WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO WORK IN THE FUNNIES?
YOU KNOW ME. ALWAYS LOOKING FOR A NEW CHALLENGE.
WELL, YOU'RE LUCKY. YOU'RE STILL YOUNG.
OH, WILL YOU STOP THAT BUNK! YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD FOR A NEW CHALLENGE. I WISH YOU'D LISTEN TO CLAY.
LISTEN, FLO. THE PASTURE IS WAITING FOR ME. THERE'S LOTS OF NICE GREEN GRASS READY FOR THE GRAZING. 'OLD MACDONALD' WANTS ME ON HIS FARM, AND I'M GOING TO OBLIGE HIM.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...
...I'M GETTING ANOTHER DRINK.


SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1941.
I SLEPT IN LATE THE DAY AFTER SAM'S PARTY. SOMETIMES I WOULD GO TO MY STUDIO ON SUNDAYS, BUT TODAY I STAYED HOME WITH NANCY AND GAIL.

I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT MOMENT. WE WERE TALKING ABOUT OUR CHRISTMAS PLANS. THE RADIO WAS ON. I WANTED TO HEAR THE MID-AFTERNOON NEWS. MUSIC WAS BEING PLAYED. THEN IT WAS STOPPED BEFORE THE SONG HAD ENDED. NANCY AND I STOPPED TALKING.
WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM FOR A SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN. IT HAS JUST BEEN LEARNED THAT JAPANESE AIR-PLANES HAVE ATTACKED THE AMERICAN NAVAL BASE AT PEARL HARBOUR, HAWAII. SERIOUS CASUALTIES ARE REPORTED. THE NAVAL AIR STATION ON FORD ISLAND HAS ALSO BEEN ATTACKED. THE ARMY AIR FORCE BASE AT HICKMAN FIELD HAS ALSO BEEN BOMBED. WE WILL HAVE MORE DETAILS AS —

THIS SOUNDS TERRIBLE.
IT IS.

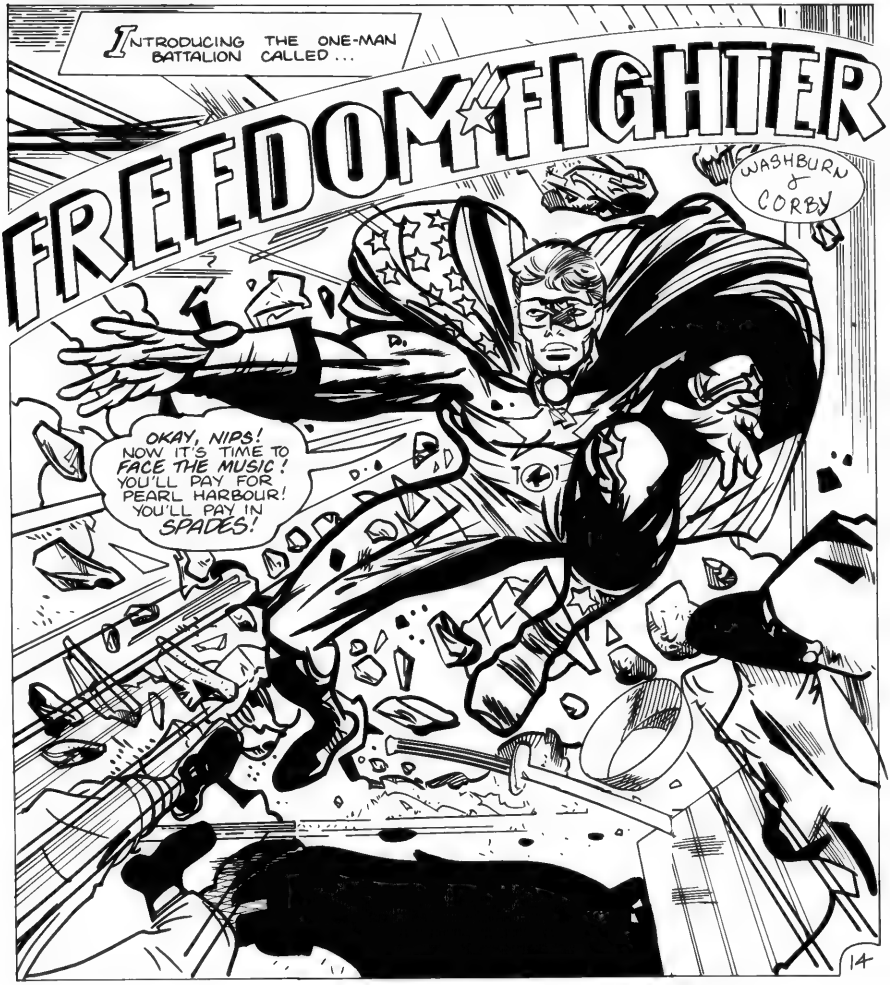
WE'LL BE GOING TO WAR, NOW.

GAIL CRIED AS WE NEGLECTED HER OVER THE NEWS ON THE RADIO.
NANCY COMFORTED GAIL FOR A MOMENT. THE RADIO WENT BACK TO PLAYING MUSIC.
I'M SCARED, CLAY.
IT HAD TO HAPPEN, NANCY. IT JUST HAD TO. WE'VE BEEN STAYING OUT OF IT TOO LONG. WE HAVE TO HELP THE REST OF THE WORLD.
I WANT YOU FOR U.S. ARMY
NEAREST RECRUITING STATION
THE NEXT DAY I WENT TO THE RECRUITING OFFICE. THEY QUICKLY SEPARATED ME AWAY FROM THE FOOTBALL-PLAYER TYPES. I WAITED A LONG TIME FOR MY INTERVIEW. DURING THE WAIT I REALIZED I WAS DESTINED TO FIGHT THIS WAR FROM BEHIND A DESK.
THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF MEN TO FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY, CLAY. WE NEED PEOPLE WITH YOUR COLLEGE BACKGROUND IN WASHINGTON. WE'RE PUTTING TOGETHER A BIG ARMY —
— PROBABLY THE BIGGEST IN THE WORLD. IT'LL BE A HELL OF A JOB TO CONTROL AND MANAGE IT.
I UNDERSTAND.

SAM CALLED ME ON THE PHONE AND ASKED IF HE COULD COME OVER FOR A TALK.
MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE, SAM.
THANKS, CLAY.
I'VE DECIDED TO TRY MY HAND IN COMICS. IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO TO HELP THE WAR EFFORT. I HATE THOSE JAPS FOR WHAT THEY'VE DONE
I WENT OUT AND BOUGHT SOME COMICS.
CAPTAIN AMERICA
AND YOU'RE RIGHT. THEY AREN'T TOO DIFFERENT FROM THE PULPS.
HA! LOOK AT CAPTAIN AMERICA BEAT UP THOSE NAZIS. BULLETS BOUNCING OFF HIS SHIELD. HA! THIS REALLY TICKLES MY FANCY.
I TOOK SAM TO MEET ZACK AT K.I.L.R.
YOU'RE HIRED, SAM. WELCOME ABOARD.
ONE OF YOUR FIRST JOBS WILL BE TO EDIT OUR NEW FREEDOM FIGHTER COMICS.
GREAT!
SOUNDS OKAY TO ME.

BACK AT MY STUDIO I WORKED ON THE FIRST THREE FREEDOM FIGHTER STORIES THAT I HAD TO WRITE FOR THE FIRST ISSUE.

K.L.R. HAD SENT ME SOME SKETCHES OF THE FREEDOM FIGHTER. THEY HAD DESIGNED A REAL SUPER-PATRIOT COSTUME FOR OUR HERO. HIS CAPE WAS A BIG UNITED STATES FLAG. HE WAS COVERED WITH MILITARY GOLD STARS. AND THEY HAD EVEN GIVEN HIM A 'TEA-BAG LOCKET' AS A SYMBOL OF THE BOSTON TEA PARTY.


INTRODUCING THE ONE-MAN BATTALION CALLED ...
FREEDOM FIGHTER
WASHBURN & CORBY
OKAY, NIPS! NOW IT'S TIME TO FACE THE MUSIC! YOU'LL PAY FOR PEARL HARBOUR! YOU'LL PAY IN SPADES!
14

COOPER FOUND HIMSELF THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF THE FREIGHTER AFTER THE JAP SUBMARINE ATTACK.
I'LL HEAD FOR THE ISLAND OF TORTUKA. IT'S UNINHABITED. I'LL BE SAFE THERE TO BUILD A STRONGER RAFT. HMMM. WASN'T TORTUKA WHERE THE FAMOUS AVIATOR, WILLY PORTER, CRASHED AND DISAPPEARED?
DON'T MOVE, YANK!
JAPS! I THOUGHT THIS ISLAND WAS DESERTED!
COOPER IS THROWN INTO THE STOCKADE.
HERE'S A NEW GUEST FOR YOU, WILLY!
WILLY PORTER?!
YES. THEY'VE KEPT ME PRISONER HERE FOR 5 YEARS, EVER SINCE THE CRASH.

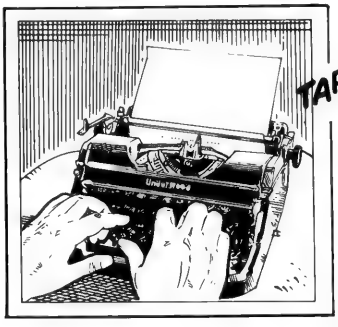
THE JAPS HAVE BEEN BUILDING A SECRET AIR BASE ON TORTUKA. THEY KEPT ME A PRISONER SO I COULDN'T TELL OUR MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ABOUT IT.
I'VE GOT TO GET US OUT OF THIS MESS--AS THE FREEDOM FIGHTER!
COME ON, WILLY. IT'S TIME TO GET YOU BACK TO CIVILIZATION!
WHAT!? YOU'RE CRAZY! YOU CAN'T BEAT OFF A WHOLE JAP BASE BY YOURSELF!
OH, YEAH? JUST WATCH ME!
CRASH!
A SIREN! BUT THEY DON'T KNOW I'VE ESCAPED YET. IT MUST BE A BATTLE STATIONS SIGNAL. THE PILOTS ARE GOING ON AN ATTACK MISSION!
THE AMERICAN PRISONERS HAVE ESCAPED! STOP THEM!
HEY, JAPS! EVER SEEN A HUMAN BOWLING BALL? STRIKE!
WHAM!
16

CALL OUT MORE GUARDS!
WE HAVE TO STOP THIS MASKED MADMAN!
BANG
WHO ARE YOU CALLING 'MADMAN', NIP? I DON'T GO FOR TALK LIKE THAT!
WHAM
I HEAR THE ENGINES OF THE PLANES. THEY MUST BE GOING TO BOMB THAT TROOP CONVOY THAT WE PASSED IN THE FREIGHTER. THOUSANDS OF G.I.'S WILL BE KILLED!
THE FREEDOM FIGHTER SPOTS A MACHINE GUN NEST ON THE EDGE OF THE AIRFIELD. HE JUMPS UP, GRABS A LOOSE JUNGLE VINE AND SWINGS INTO ACTION!
WATCH OUT, YOU LITTLE TYRANTS FROM TOKYO! THE FREEDOM EXPRESS IS ROLLING THROUGH AND I'M THE LOCOMOTIVE!
THUD
BAM
17

THE FIRST JAP BOMBERS MAKE THEIR TAKE-OFF RUNS DOWN THE AIRSTRIP.
RATTATTATTATTATTATTATTA!!
I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU BIRDS DROP YOUR T.N.T. EGGS ON ANY AMERICAN BOYS!
YOU YELLOW BUSH-WACKERS ARE GOOD AT DISHING IT OUT! NOW, LET'S SEE HOW YOU STOMACH GETTING SOME OF YOUR OWN MEDICINE!
BOOM!
18

THE JAPS WON'T GET ANY BOMBERS INTO THE AIR NOW. THE CONVOY IS SAFE. I'LL GET WILLY PORTER AND WE'LL LEAVE THE ISLAND WHILE THE JAPS ARE STILL CONFUSED.

YOU'RE THE ONLY PERSON WHO KNOWS MY SECRET IDENTITY NOW, WILLY. YOU'VE GOT TO PROMISE ME THAT YOU'LL KEEP IT UNDER YOUR HAT.
YOUR SECRET IS SAFE WITH ME. I SWEAR IT!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TAP
IT LOOKS LIKE THESE COMIC STORIES WILL BE THE LAST THINGS THAT I EVER WRITE IN THIS ROOM.

I WENT TO THE WINDOW TO OPEN IT AND GET SOME FRESH AIR INTO THE STUDIO.

I THOUGHT ABOUT ALL THE TIMES, OVER THE NINE YEARS THAT I HAD LIVED HERE, THAT I HAD COME TO THIS WINDOW TO BROOD ABOUT THE WORLD AND PONDER MY OWN DESTINY.

EVENTS HAD MOVED SLOWLY FOR ME IN MY LIFE, AND I WAS HAPPY FOR THAT. I HATED SUDDEN CHANGES.

BUT NOW MY LIFE - LIKE ALL OTHER AMERICANS - HAD BEEN HIT BY A TORNADO OF CHANGE. I SENSED A STRANGE MOOD IN MYSELF, AND IN OTHER PEOPLE WHO WERE ABOUT TO GO TO THIS NEW WAR. IT SEEMED THAT THE MORE FACTS WE ALL LEARNED ABOUT THE INFAMOUS ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOUR, THE MORE IT AFFECTED OUR RESOLVE. WE WERE READY TO ROLL UP OUR COLLECTIVE SLEEVES AND DO BATTLE WITH OUR ENEMIES. THEY STARTED IT - WE WERE GOING TO FINISH IT.

I KNEW THAT THIS WOULD BE THE LAST TIME I EVER LOOKED OUT THIS WINDOW. A FLOOD OF MEMORIES STRUCK ME. THEY SEEMED TO SEEP OUT OF THE WALLS. THIS ROOM HAD BEEN MY WORLD - MY LIFE.

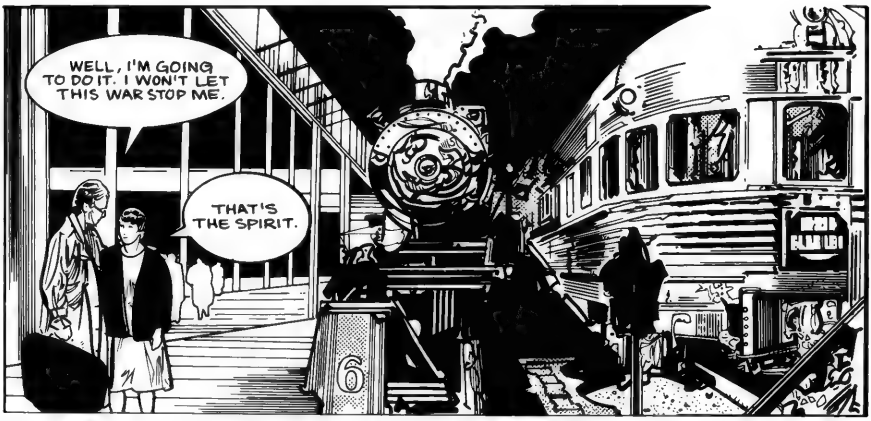
NOW I KNEW WHAT SAM KAISER HAD FELT IN HIS OFFICE JUST A FEW DAYS AGO.

DECEMBER 17, 1941.
OH. HERE'S CLAY, NOW.
HI, SAM. I'VE GOT ALL THE STORIES FOR YOU.
GOOD. JAKE JUST FINISHED THE SPLASH PAGE DRAWING FOR NUMBER ONE. NICE, HUH?
WOW! THAT'S A REAL EYE-OPENER! DO YOU HAVE ANY FORMAL ART TRAINING, JAKE?
JAKE CORBY LOOKED AT ME AND SMIRKED.
NAW. YOU CAN'T BE TRAINED TO DO COMICS. COMICS ARE TOO NEW. THE ARTISTS WILL HAVE TO ADAPT TO THE COMICS; RATHER THAN THE COMICS ADAPTING TO US. THAT'S WHAT I THINK.
WHILE JAKE AND I WENT OUT TO LUNCH TOGETHER, SAM READ OVER THE FREEDOM FIGHTER STORIES IN HIS OFFICE.
LATER, AS I RODE THE ELEVATOR BACK UP TO THE K.L.R. OFFICE I THOUGHT —
I WONDER IF SAM COULD GIVE ME MY CHECK FOR THE STORIES TODAY.
BUT, I WAS IN FOR A SHOCK.
SORRY, CLAY. YOU'LL HAVE TO WORK ON THESE STORIES SOME MORE.

YOU'RE REJECTING MY STORIES? I THOUGHT THEY WERE GOOD. I PUT A LOT OF EFFORT INTO THEM.
I DIDN'T SAY I WAS REJECTING THEM. I'M SAYING THEY'VE GOT SOME ROUGH EDGES.
IN THAT SECRET AIR BASE STORY YOU'VE GOT THE HERO USING A MACHINE-GUN. THAT'S GOT TO BE CUT.
THESE 'SUPER-MEN' IN THE FUNNIES AREN'T PULP HEROES, CLAY. YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW THEM USING THEIR 'SUPER' SKILLS!
YOU'RE RIGHT. I'LL CHANGE IT... HA! I GUESS IT'LL TAKE ME LONGER TO LEARN THE ROPES IN THIS BUSINESS THAN I THOUGHT.
WELL, IF I CAN DO IT — YOU CAN DO IT... IT'S A CHALLENGE, RIGHT?
RIGHT!
I RETURNED HOME.
A TELEGRAM CAME FOR YOU WHILE YOU WERE OUT, HONEY.
IT'S FROM THE WAR DEPARTMENT.
THEY WANT ME TO REPORT TO WASHINGTON IN TEN DAYS.
THAT'S JUST ENOUGH TIME TO CLOSE UP THE STUDIO.

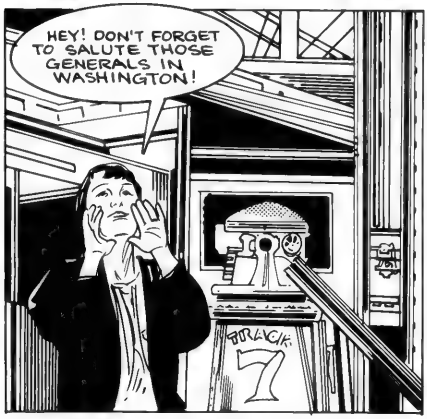
AND SO TWO DAYS AFTER CHRISTMAS WE WERE AT PENN STATION. NANCY HAD COME TO SEE ME OFF ON THE TRAIN.

WELL, WORDSMITH. I HOPE YOU'LL FIND TIME TO DO SOME WRITING.
I'M WORKING ON A NEW DETECTIVE CHARACTER. THE HERO IS A GENTLEMAN SLEUTH – LIKE PHILO VANCE OR THE SAINT.


WELL, I'M GOING TO DO IT. I WON'T LET THIS WAR STOP ME.
THAT'S THE SPIRIT.

AND LISTEN, HONEY. WHILE YOU'RE DOING ALL THIS WRITING – DON'T FORGET TO WRITE TO YOUR LONELY WIFE.

I'LL GIVE YOU A PHONE CALL AT NEW YEAR'S.
GOOD. THAT WAY I'LL KNOW YOU'RE NOT AT SOME PARTY HAVING FUN... 'BYE SWEETHEART!


HEY! DON'T FORGET TO SALUTE THOSE GENERALS IN WASHINGTON!

YES, SIR!

THE END

LOGO BY RON HOBBS

PULP FEVER

Send Letters to: PULP FEVER, c/o Dragon Lady Comic Shop, 200 Queen St. W., Toronto, Ontario M5V 1Z2

A NOTE FROM DAVE

This is our first Pulp Fever page since WORDSMITH #8. It is also our last Pulp Fever page. Due to this fact I'm afraid that we won't be able to print the letters of many people whom I privately promised would see their letters published. I hope that the three 32 page stories that we did in #9, #10, and #11 were enjoyed by these people, and that they will forgive any unfulfilled promises.

In the last Pulp Fever I also mentioned a comics project called THE SNAKE. At that time we had hoped to have it out in the summer of '87, but our schedule hit some unexpected snags. Artist Ron Hobbs is nearly finished the story and we hope to have it out this summer from Dragon Lady Press.

In July Renegade will be publishing a new crime series I'm writing called TONY BRAVADO: TROUBLE-SHOOTER. Two fellow Canadians- Steve LeBlanc and Louis Paradis-will be illustrating it. If you like MS. TREE or the Johnny Dynamite stories from the '50's that are being reprinted in MS. TREE, you will like TONY BRAVADO.

Dear David

Congratulations on an outstanding publication. WORDSMITH is unique in that it has reality and substance, human emotions, and depicts a real period in early American literature- the Depression era of the pulp magazine, and authors who worked for a cent a word. The era of the "wordsmith."

I thank you for mentioning my publication, **Echoes**, and I do appreciate the review which Richard Harvey was kind enough to give us in issue #5. However, I do not feel that Richard was very complimentary to us, and I would like to clear up a few facts which he may not have been aware of.

Richard states about Echoes: "This fanzine has been published since the summer of 1984 and has already suffered from a rocky schedule."

Actually we began Echoes in June of 1982 and have **never** been late: there have been times when subscription renewals delayed printing of the magazine for a few weeks, but the magazine has always appeared-if not before the date-in the **month** of its date. We have never missed an issue since we have been in business.

Richard also states: "It is rather crude in appearance."

This is certainly true. Our subscribers pay $3.00 per issue, and with 150 subscriptions we bring in $450.00 per issue for a magazine that costs $500.00 to print and mail. Which doesn't count the necessities of such items as typing paper, envelopes, and sundry other items too numerous to mention.

With each issues ads we break even. There is no way we can print a more **professional-looking** magazine without first obtaining a larger circulation.

Again, I appreciate the review that Richard gave us: I only wish he had stated the facts more clearly and accurately. I'm afraid that his review **hurt** us more than helped us. I hope that the readers of WORDSMITH, who are interested in the pulp magazines, will give us a try. We in pulp fandom are a small but honorable group and we need your support.

Tom Johnson, Seymour, TX

Echoes is a bi-monthly publication that prints a variety of material covering all ranges of the pulp era. To inquire more about it please write to Tom at 504 East Morris Street. Seymour, Texas. 76380 And for a complete list of current pulp-zines and where to write to them, please refer to Pulp Fever in WORDSMITH #5.

Dear Dave and R.G.

In "Haunted By Ghosts"(#6) we see Clay struggle with the worthiness of the pulps as opposed to 'real' literature. This should be a matter close to the heart of comics fans since , in many ways, comic books are in the same position as the pulps were in Clay's time. In particular, we've all been faced with the question of why we read comics instead of reading something else, or watching TV or movies or whatever.

While we comics fans are usually confronted about reading this

material on the basis of our age (Aren't you a little too old to be reading these things?), the audience separation for the pulps is put to us on the basis of class. "Average' or 'working class' people read pulps, while more 'sophisticated' shun them. Using comics as a parallel, I'm not sure if this is entirely true. Comics readers seem to come from all walks of life.

About this story's conclusion in #6- I'm not sure how we're suppose to take the meeting with Virgil Grant. Sure, he's a lout and a 'real' author, but does this mean all 'real' authors are louts and, if so- so what?

Perhaps it is because Clay wants to be a 'great' author for himself and not for his writing. It seems to me that most great authors write because they have to (or want to), not with visions of success and money in their minds (though this may come to influence them later). Clay seems to see his writing as a means to an end (personal success and contentment) , not as an end in itself. Perhaps this is why Grant disturbs him so, he wants to be a successful writer in order to be a happy man—so if being successful in writing destroys you personally, then what's the point?

I await to see what Clay's thoughts on this will turn out to be.

T.M. Maple, Weston, Ontario

Clay is already financially successful, T.M. And, he's held in high esteem by his editors and fellow pulp scribes. He's made it to the top of the heap in his trade—but he still wants more challenges. He simply wants to better himself and his work. He doesn't want to write 'disposable' words anymore—but, rather, words of substance which will outlive him.

If Clay lacks the necessary drive and willpower to follow his dreams it's because he doesn't want to throw away everything that he's built up. Especially during the Depression. You're right—Clay is thinking about himself. He's thinking about his survival.

Or is he using all this as an excuse to keep him from risking his present success? Will Clay use Virgil Grant as an excuse to keep where he is; amongst his 'friends' and 'fans'?

One big illusion was shattered for Clay at the story's end. The illusion that he would be a 'better' man if he wrote 'better' stories.

By the way—in Frank Gruber's memoir, the Pulp Jungle, he relates a similar experience that he had with Thomas Wolfe. Gruber found Wolfe to be an egotistical bore. I didn't think Gruber would mind that I borrowed this incident.

Dear Dave,R.G. and Deni,

I thought I should write and say how much I'v been enjoying Wordsmith.

I deejay at a college radio (KSDT at UC San Diego) and have begun producing a weekly taped 'Comic Book Review' segement that typicallly runs 10 or 15 minutes, during which I and some other comic collectors talk about recent titles that interest us. For our final show of the quarter, my review was of Wordsmith. Below, I've reproduced some of the thoughts I shared with our listeners:

"For the Christmas edition of the Comic Book Review, I've picked WORDSMITH, from Renegade Press,

The most recent issue is #7, appropriately entitled, 'Tis The Season To Be Jolly'. This is no silly tale, though, of a choking, artificial moment of sentiment, making a break in the winter comics violence, like you'd get from most mainstream comics publishers. This is a story of a man who needed a few extra bucks and found something more besides, in the process enriching both his own life and that of another human being.

This particular issue is not an exception; WORDSMITH is always touching. Ultimately this is the work of the comic's creators, but one of the reasons they are so successful is the main character himself. As a writer, Clay is naive and world-wise at the same time; thus he becomes an extremely facile vehicle for narrative expression. In his dealings with his friends, his editors, his fellow man, Clay sticks by his ideals without being a fool. He is sometimes thanked, sometimes mocked, and sometimes lonely; but he measures himself with the same calculating, objective eye that guides his pulp characters. Clay and the reader are both cynical enough to know what this costs him—his girlfriend's love in issue #2; his own pulp magazine in issue #3; and even the ridicule of his friends in issue #5. But he keeps going on despite this. Here is a man who tries to see and do the right thing, not because of what people will think, but so he can sleep at night.

"He is a role model any man should be proud to follow, sympathetic and inspiring. I don't know about everyone else, but that is why I read comic books."

So, Dave and R.G., I hope this makes you feel good.

As a final note, please don't discontinue Pulp Fever. A good comic is much more than just words and pictures. It is an amalgamate of its creators and its fans. Don't deny your fans a venue for expressing themselves, or yourself a format for saying something that doesn't appear in that issue's story.

Keep up the good work!

Don Rice, San Diego, CA

(Due to space limitations Don's letter was edited. His radio transcription was not published here in its entirety.)

Don—all I can say is that letters such as yours have really helped our morale as Rick (R.G.) and I have watched the sales figures slide into oblivion. A letter like yours touches our hearts as surely as our work has touched yours.

Dear Smiths,

A word of thanks. This letter is not to massage an ego (mine or yours). It is not to delve into the meanings of the universe as laid out in WORDSMITH. Nor is it written to make people wish they were me (or you). This is, simply, a word of thanks.

I read WORDSMITH #7 today and was enriched as a result of it. Your stories, (coupled with the artwork and layout which is perfect for them) are beyond pure entertainment. They are moving, multi-levelled, human, and above all, thought-provoking. While I am not about to comment on the themes and philosophies presented (I have neither the need nor inclination to work out my personal interpretations of the world in your pages) I must say that I truly admire and respect your efforts.

In a medium (among other media) which has become an ever-deepening rut of conformity in the face of trendy, easily-assimilated concepts and ideas, you are obviously writing what you feel is important. While this may not result in your becoming a 'comic-god' , or the salvation of the publishing world, I hope it does result in both an immense feeling of satisfaction, and an ability to buy food.

In closing, let me say that Deni Loubert deserves our respect, our thanks, and as much fame and riches (though I truly feel that she makes decisions regarding what to publish besides just $$$) as is possible.

If any of you turns up in the Boston area feel free to drop in, and you will be assured of a place where the heat is turned on, the talk is good (or at least plentiful) and the wine ever-flowing.

Paul Fugazzotto, Boston, MS

The words of your letter bring us enough pleasure, Paul, but the actual form of your letter is of even greater pleasure and, I think, goes far in illustrating how the audience for comics is changing.

Paul is a dental specialist who wrote to us on his office stationery. 'Paul A. Fugazzotto. D.D.S.,P.C. Practice Limited to Periodontics.'

I enjoy the image of Paul at his office, a respected doctor in the community, writing a fan letter to a comic book. Paul's letter was not typed—it was done in ink, in printed words.

Thanks for those words, Paul. Thanks very much.

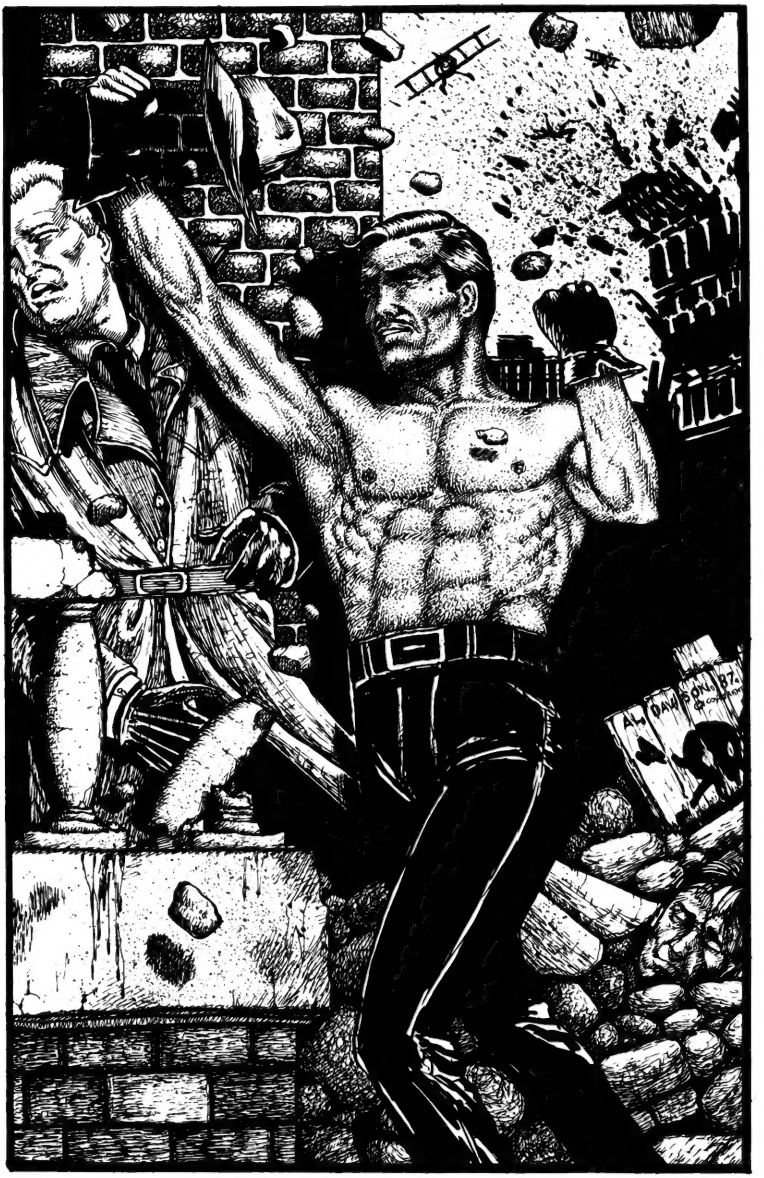
PULP PORTRAIT

by **Al Davidson**

THE BLACK BAT

PULP PORTRAIT

by **Al Davidson**



OPERATOR #5

THE PULP FILE

by Don Hutchison

The Pulps are Dead.... Long Live Pulp Fiction

Call it nostalgia or trivia or whatever, but our society is undergoing a period of retrospection. Hundreds of old movies are being watched daily on videotape and the late show. Geriatric actors are being wheeled out of retirement to appear on TV pilots based on hit shows of thirty years ago. And paperback book racks are stuffed with the works of dead pulp writers like **Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Earl Stanley Gardner, Zane Grey, Max Brand, Edgar Rice Burroughs and Robert E. Howard.**

Come to think of it, the work of the above writers has never been long out of print. The enduring popularity of their stories has little to do with the type of paper on which they are printed. Pulp fiction, you see, did not originate in the pulps, nor did it end with their demise. It is part of a long tradition of story-telling that has no foreseeable end.

In 1955 **Street and Smith** —one of the oldest and most prestigious pulp fiction publishers—celebrated its one hundredth anniversary with the publication of a book titled THE FICTION FACTORY by the famous journalist Quentin Reynolds. This one book provides indisputable proof that the pulps were the direct successors to the dime novels of the last century and that the dime novels had in turn replaced the family story papers of an earlier generation. Reynolds traces the history of Street and Smith from early story papers like the **New York Weekly** up through dime novel series such as the **Nick Carter Detective Library** to the more familiar pulps of the 1930's and 40's. The author does not mention it but, by the time he wrote his book, the pulps were themselves already dead or dying, replaced by comic books and inexpensive paperbacks.

The history of cheap fiction for the masses can be traced to fallout from the Industrial Revolution. When more leisure time for workers was combined with universal education and the invention of the steam printing press, a new reading public was created. Inevitably, a new type of literature arose to meet demand—a literature that did not attempt to educate or uplift, but existed simply to entertain. Freed of the patronage of the well educated and the wealthy, it was literature conceived as a branch of show business, produced for a mass audience that wished to be excited and amused.

What we now call "pulp" fiction was produced as early as the 1840's when publishers decided that one way to lower costs, and thus price, was to use the newspaper presses and cheap newsprint paper. A news sheet, doubled to make four pages, made a reasonable book-like format. The product of this discovery was something called the family story paper.

Such story papers as **The Corsair** and the **Yankee Privateer**, although called newspapers and enjoying special newspaper postal rates, were really collections of fiction that ran novels in serial form.

Then came the revolution. In 1860 a firm called **Beadle and Adams** published a paperbound novel for ten cents, titled **Malaeska:The Indian Wife of The White Hunter.** The dime novel had arrived.

For the next forty years dime novels (later reduced to a nickel) would pour from the presses by the millions. They would be much criticized and reviled; but generations of children gobbled them up because they found that beneath the lurid paper covers were even more lurid stories chock full of blood, bullets, cliff-hanger suspense and relentless, frantic action. The dime novel paper shocker introduced and defined the staples of pulp fiction: Western stories, war stories, pirate stories, romance stories, action-detective stories, and even continuing character series.

By the turn of the century the appeal of the dime novel had waned. Its characters, style and action-oriented plots were soon transferred to the "pulps" so called because a publisher named **Frank Munsey** had begun to print an adventure magazine titled **Argosy** on cheap pulpwood paper. Munsey had the idea that the story was more important than what it was printed on. He must have guessed correctly because the lowly pulp magazines went on to become the most popular form of reading material in America between World War I and the end of World War II. For ten cents, these magazines contained novels, short stories, information departments and artwork, allowing a reader to get lost in the world of **Tarzan, The Shadow, Zorro,** or **The Rio Kid.**

Street and Smith began to turn their paper-covered books into pulp magazines as early as 1903. Eventually, **The Buffalo Bill Weekly** dime novel series was transformed into **Western Story Magazine**, with old Bill held over briefly in a series of new stories. Likewise, that resolute but fictitious detective, Nick Carter, became editor emeritus of the newly-created **Detective Story Magazine.** Later, Nick would get his own pulp title, making him the only character in history to appear in story papers, dime novels, the pulps—and still going strong in the 1980's in his own paperback series.

What made the pulps different from the weekly story papers and dime novels was that they were true magazines, generous in both size and variety of content. They were an all-permeating atmosphere, a delirious environment of irresistible covers, dynamic

THE PULP FILE

by Don Hutchison

illustrations, worshipful letters and breathless fiction. As an audience for pulp thrillers grew, the magazines became an enormous market for would-be wordsmiths as well as familiar names.By the 1920's and 30's the mass-market pulps were into a Golden Age of creativity, with new and exciting writers commanding armies of devoted fans.

The fantasy pulps developed such names as Robert E. Howard, **H.P. Lovecraft** and Edgar Rice Burroughs. The detective story was elevated to a fine—and peculiarly American—art form by the gargantuan talents of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and **Cornell Woolrich**. The Western pulps had Max Brand, **Walt Coburn** and **Ernest Haycox** among others, and the adventure fiction field boasted too many famous names to enumerate.

Possibly the only fictional category invented by the pulps was that of science fiction. Beginning as early as 1910, adventure titles like **Argosy** and **All-Story Magazine** had featured what they called "scientific romances" ,stories of lost races and adventure on other planets. But it took a man named **Hugo Gernsback** to begin a new magazine , **Amazing Stories**, that would deal exclusively with this new breed of story as a genre in itself.

To set the record straight, much of Gernsback's early SF was crude stuff that placed heavier emphasis on scientific extrapolation than on the pulp virtues of plotting, pace, and readability. It wasn't until the mid 1930's, when young **John Campbell** took over a magazine called **Astounding Stories** , that science fiction began to reach a wider audience. Campbell felt that in addition to scientific accuracy a science fiction story should also feature the elements of good story telling to be found in other pulps and in literature in general. He even wrote a story," Who Goes There?", to show how it could be properly done.

During the 1940's—under Campbell's leadership—hundreds of new writers were discovered and dozens of other SF pulps flourished in **Astoundings'** wake. Detective novels and Westerns had always rated hardcover publication, but for writers of science fiction the pulps were the only game in town. As a result, many of the field's acknowledged classics were first published in the magazines: "Against the Fall of Night," "Slan," " The Star Kings," "More Than Human," "The Demolished Man," most of **Asimov**, most of **Sturgeon,** most of **Simak**, most of **Bradbury.** (If Ray Bradbury fans look up their favorite Bradbury story the chances are good that it appeared first in the 1940's in **Planet Stories** or **Weird Tales** or **Startling Stories** or even **Dime Mystery Stories.** Today, the identical tales are reprinted over and over again in school textbooks.)

While the pulps enjoyed unprecedented profits during World War II the growing cost of wood-pulp paper combined with the erosion of their entertainment market by comic books, paperbacks, radio, the movies, and later television, soon conspired against them. Even so, numerous embryo writers entered the field in its final days, earning one and two-cents a-word as they learned and then polished their craft. Among the late bloomers were **Arthur C. Clarke, John D. MacDonald, Mickey Spillane** and **Louis L'Amour.**

Most pulpsters never escaped from their cent-a-word ghetto. Not all of them disappeared when the pulps did, however. Many found work in the comic books and paperback originals.

In his "History of Comics" Jim Steranko suggests that early comic books were extensions of the pulp magazine formula, maintaining the same categories — detective,Western, adventure, science fiction and mystery—as the pulps. The reason for this is not difficult to fathom when you consider that many Golden Age comics were produced by pulp publishers quick to get into the lucrative action. **Fiction House** turned their **Jungle, Planet** and **Wings** pulps into comic book titles. **Standard Publications** attached their "startling" and "thrilling" adjectives to the **Nedor** comics logos. **Martin Goodman** used the pulp treatment in **Timely Comics** (his **Marvel Science Stories** pulp became **Marvel Comics**). and Street and Smith soon molded their line of pulp heroes into graphic story formats.

Many pulp writers followed their publishers into comics, where they labored effectively but anonymously. Others, like John D. MacDonald and Louis L'Amour , emigrated to the paperback field where publishers were still printing pulp-style fiction written by pulp graduates.

While he is known today as a best-selling Western novelist, Louis L'Amour wrote detective, mystery, air war, sports, and straight adventure stories in his literary apprenticeship. He has since remarked, "The pulps were a valuable training ground because they required that you know how to tell a story, and the story had to **move.**"

It might surprise John D. MacDonald fans to know that his first story was sold to **Doc Savage** magazine and that he went on to have a total of 34 stories published in that magazine and in **The Shadow** between August of 1946 and October of 1948. In addition, MacDonald turned out some first-rate science fiction for the pulps before moving on to deserved fame and fortune in paperback originals, and then, like L'Amour, in hardcover.

A few of the better mystery-suspense writers were able to make an effortless transition form the pages of **Black Mask** and **Dime Detective** into mass-market paperbacks, where the dark and dangerous worlds of MacDonald, **David Goodis, Jim Thompson** and Mickey Spillane were to become part of the folklore of our times. Inevitably, the pulp fiction formula was inherited by writers who came too late for the pulps but continued to write in that tradition: **Donald Hamilton, , Alistair MacLean, Ross MacDonald, Robert Ludlum, Ian Fleming, Max Collins, Clive Cussler, Bill Pronsini,Loren D. Estelman, Lawrence Block, Robert B. Parker.** The list goes on and on, with a vigorous resurgence of the private eye genre in the 1980's—a sub-category of fiction first invented in the pulps some sixty years ago!

Today, bookstore racks are crowded with "men's action/adventure series", chronicling the exploits of such neo-pulp avengers as The Executioner, The Destroyer, The Death Merchant, and even the original Nick Carter (or at least his sexy grandson). Viet Nam vet mercenaries, post-nuclear holocaust patriots, counter-terrorist teams, W.W.II G.I. kill squads — the 'bloody' pulp tradition is still here around us.

Yes, the old pulps are gone. They are collectors' items now, their colorful covers period pieces. But the brand of fiction they popularized was too vital to destroy. It lives on in endless reprints and in work by new writers who, consciously or unconsciously, have learned what the pulps had to teach: how to tell a story, and how to make the story **move.**

The pulps are dead. But pulp fiction is alive and well.

The Last Word

Clay Washburn's story is not over. But, for now, this is the end of Wordsmith. It may return in the form of reprint albums. Or there may be new stories in a different (non-comics) format.

There is no "happy-ever-after" for Clay and Nancy. Life is not like that. Life is not a fairy tale. Yet fairy tales are a necessity in our lives. You have seen through this series, one man's search for the meaning of our fantasies. This search will never end.

The creators wish to thank many people for their help. But foremost among them we have to thank our publisher, who kept the book going through lean times and who truly joined us, in spirit, to create this book as a labour of love.

Our warmest regards

R.G. Taylor Dave Darrigo